

Veranstalter.....	Prof. Dr. Thomas Berg
Thema.....	Serial order in language
Art der Veranstaltung.....	Seminar II
Veranstaltungsnummer.....	53-518
Zeit.....	2st. Do 14 - 16
Raum.....	Phil 1269
Beginn.....	03.04.2014

Course description:

Serial order is a natural means of coding information in human languages. “John loves Mary” expresses quite a different meaning from “Mary loves John”. However, this is not always so. There is hardly any semantic difference between “a linguistically most complex region” and “a most linguistically complex region”. This raises a number of questions such as: Which information is typically encoded by serial order and which is not? By what set of factors (semantic or otherwise) is serial order determined? To what extent do languages such as English and German exploit serial order as a coding device? Moreover, serial order is not the sole province of syntax. It is also relevant in morphology and phonology. Morphemes need to be ordered, as in compounds (compare e.g. “houseboat” to “boathouse”).

Historical phonology knows such ordering phenomena as metathesis (e.g. Old English “thridde” > “third”) , as does variationist phonology (e.g. “ask” vs. “axe” in Afro-American English). Last but not least, serial order constitutes a serious psycholinguistic challenge, as speakers have to turn an abstract parallel representation into a temporally ordered sequence of linguistic units. During this process, misordering errors may occur, as in “he threw the clock through the window” -> “he threw the window through the clock”.

A theory of serial order in syntax has been propounded by Hawkins, John: A theory of order and constituency. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Requirements

Regular attendance

Oral Report

Term paper